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The voice of the church one

THE

VOICE OF THE CHURCH ONE,

UNDER ALL THE SUCCESSIVE FORMS OF CHRISTIANITY:

A DISCOURSE,

PRONOUNCED AT THE OPENING OF THE

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL AT GENEVA.

By J. H. MERLE D'AUBIGNE, D. D.

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[TRANSLATED BY REV. R. SMITH, WATERFORD, N. Y.]

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THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH ONE.

What astonishing labours — what untiring activities — what varied efforts, do men employ on earth! But time passes its level, for the most part, over their productions; while they imagine themselves to be building a tower which shall reach to the heavens, their proud works are confounded, after a few generations, with the sands of the desert.

There is nothing stable here, but Christianity. That alone is immovable, like its Author. It is this rock against which have broken, and are still breaking, waves ever new, without being able to shake it.

If, then, there is any one who wishes to give stability to his work on earth, let him connect it with Religion: it will receive from this connexion an impress of immortality.

I am aware, Gentlemen, that these are truths not generally recognized among men. There are two prevailing errors on this subject. There are those who find nothing unchangeable even in the essence of Christianity. "The Christian doctrine," say they, "is only a particular development of the religious sentiment. This form has succeeded to a previous one, and will, in turn, be succeeded by another. The Religion of Christ sprang necessarily out of the state of humanity in the time of the Cæsars, as a tree in Spring produces buds and flowers." Singular error of Rationalism; but which history refutes in the clearest manner. History shows that Christianity was not in accordance with the directions of the human mind, at the time it

appeared, but in direct opposition to them. The wisdom of the world did not give Christianity birth; — it sought to crush it. Christianity was not the child of the times: it was, on the contrary, its adversary and regenerator; and as it was not from the dust of the earth that this precious fruit sprang, it cannot of course return thither again. Then did the Heavens give a treasure to the world, which successive generations ought to transmit uncorrupted from hand to hand. This is the treasure which we have received; which we are to hold with fear and reverence in earthen vessels; and we, in turn, must transmit it to our posterity, still unchanged and unchangeable amongst millions of men, "until the heavens and the earth flee away, and there is found no more place for them."

But if we encounter, on the one hand, the triflers with Christianity, we meet, on the other, with those who would give to it *a uni-*

formity of appearance in all ages. There is something, undoubtedly, which never changes in Christianity, and that is its essence; but there is something also, which does change, and that is its appearance: and it is for want of properly understanding this distinction, that so many have erred in regard to the invariableness of Christ's religion. A man changes his *appearance* at different ages of his life: his essence, never: — he is still the same man.

The Christian Religion, at the time it came from heaven, was under the necessity, as is every thing else in this world, of clothing itself in a human form. The external circumstances of different epochs, must exercise an influence upon the successive developments of Christian truth. To such a form must succeed such another; nor could these forms be things altogether indifferent. Some have been better than others; but the same

essential verities have been found in all past varieties, and will be, in all which are to come.

Gentlemen — the work in which we are engaged, and of which I am to give you some account to-day, is, in itself, a feeble, an humble work; but here is its glory, that it belongs to the work of eternity. If we attach ourselves to that which belongs to the *appearance* of Religion only, we can have no security for that which we labour to defend. The first revolution of society would sweep our work to the tomb. But if we address ourselves to the essence of Christianity, the cause to which we devote ourselves partakes of the perpetuity of the work of God. *We* may fail; and being mortal, we shall fail: our school may fail; but the cause to which it is devoted shall not fail, neither in this place, nor in all the earth. To that cause, according to the ancient oracle, "the gather-

ing of the people shall be." Yes, Gentlemen, here lies the foundation of all our hopes; it is this which, by the grace of God, shall animate us in all our difficulties and trials: and it will be worth our pains to explain and defend, on the present occasion, this remarkable characteristic of the Religion of Jesus Christ — *The invariableness of its doctrines, under different forms:* or, *The voice of the Church one and the same, in all ages.*

If we search in the different periods of history for the human forms in which the truth of God has been clothed, we shall find a great number. It is necessary, therefore, to bring them together — to re-unite and amass them. We shall obtain thus, in the last synthesis, FOUR PERIODS, or principal forms of Christianity. — The first, is the *primitive*, or *the form of Life;* the second is *the form of Dogma;* the third, *the Scholastic*, or, *the form of the School;* and the last, *the form*

of the Reformation. —— The Church of Christ, to use a Scriptural illustration, is like an individual man. It has its youth, its maturity, its old age — and then, if we might so say, it has, without dying, a glorious resurrection.

Let us run rapidly over these four forms — so diverse, I had almost said, so opposite, in appearance — and see if we do not find, under each of them, the same unchangeable truths.

We shall hear the voice of Doctors. Undoubtedly, the declarations of no one single man are sufficient to satisfy us what was the faith of the Church; but if, on examining those Doctors who lived in countries the most distant from each other, we find, amidst great diversities of views, some doctrines on which they are all agreed, shall we not safely conclude that these doctrines have also been those of all the Church throughout the earth?

What, then, are the points on which to direct our present inquiry?

All Christianity, as well as all religious Philosophy, has respect, necessarily, to *three* principal points. It has respect, at first, to GOD; and then, to MAN; and then, to the RELATION between God and man; or, the scheme adopted by Deity to restore man to himself, which is REDEMPTION.

Let us now see what the voice of the Church has taught us, on these three points, in the different periods of Christianity. — There is,

I. — THE FORM OF LIFE.

In considering this form, we shall omit the time of the Apostles; since that deserves to be considered by itself. The primitive form, according to our plan, commences with the successors of the Apostles, and extends to the time of Arius. The character which distin-

guishes it, is that of *life*. The truths of Religion were not yet exhibited with that precision and system which distinguished them at a later period. The essential thing was *the life* which results from these truths, when properly received. They lived for Christ, in the midst of a world of idolatry; they died for Christ, in the arena and on the funeral pile, and without much discussing the nature of his person, or disputing about his work. Christianity was content to exist, and to know and profess that it existed, without enunciating and classifying all the parts in which that existence consisted. Just as a man is satisfied for a long time to have and enjoy being, without studying and explaining in what that being consists.

Certain Rationalistic Doctors strangely infer from this character of the primitive form of Christianity, that the Christian truths did not then exist, and that because there was no

dogmatism, there were therefore no doctrines. But to reason thus, is to reason as strangely and falsely as would that inexperienced observer, who should maintain that the essential parts of a human being did not exist until the man had made a precise and rational analysis of them.

It results from this characteristic also, that the controversies of this period turn very little upon dogmas. The differences are in *tendencies* rather than *doctrines*. We shall meet with families presenting different aspects, rather than sects maintaining different doctrines. Let us trace these families a little, before proceeding to notice the doctrines which they all agreed to proclaim.

To the inspiration of the Apostles succeeded the simple Christianity of the Apostolic Fathers. It would seem that the ordinary course of nature had in this case been reversed, and that the ingenuousness and sim-

plicity of infancy had followed the strength and maturity of the full-grown man. The Church, under the instruction of her Ignatius, her Polycarp, and many other faithful disciples, lived under the great idea of the speedy return of Jesus Christ: and behold the summary of her faith! "*A new creation must be accomplished in humanity, before the arrival of that solemn day.*" "There are," says Barnabas, "three constitutions, or three economies of the Lord; — *the hope of life*, (the Old Testament,) *the commencement of life*, (the New Testament,) and *the consummation of life*, (the Kingdom of Heaven.)"

But by little and little this direction towards the heavens, seems to decline in the Church. A generation appears, which does not so deeply penetrate the spirit of Jesus Christ. They gather curious traditions concerning this terrestrial appearing of Christ. Some carnal Jews, who are still expecting a

Messiah altogether human, brought in the grossest views under a Christian name. It seemed as if the Church was fatigued with her exalted flight, and was beginning to seek the earth. Let us not be astonished at this. One always experiences languor and drowsiness after long watching and care.

But there now appeared on the limits of Christianity, and almost beyond it, a tendency directly the opposite of this. Oriental Philosophy attempts to unite itself with the Religion of Jesus. It seeks to take away from Religion its practical character, and to convert it into systems, which lose themselves in the clouds. *Gnosticism* substituted for a salutary faith, a fantastic cosmogony, by means of which it proposed to explain that which is inexplicable, and to cultivate a theosophy, which would procure for man on earth the sublime contemplations of Heaven. The West recoils before these adventurous vaga-

ries of the East. In Proconsular Africa, and among the Gauls, the *Tertullians* and the *Irenæuses* arise. These offer a Christianity simple, positive, historical — and propose to men that faith which nourishes alike the little and the great. Regarding Philosophy as the source of Gnosticism, they begin to view with distrust the wisdom and scientific culture of the Greeks.

But this exclusive simplicity has also its dangers. The cultivated Pagans, not finding in the Christianity offered them, any thing which responds to their intellectual taste, remain in the worship of their false Gods, or precipitately cast themselves into the adventurous systems of the Gnostics. Alexandria — situated on the borders of the Nile, between the East and West — remarks this: Alexandria, the grand mart of the Sciences — where the gospel is said to have been carried by the Apostle Mark — undertakes to mediate between these two tendencies of man, into

which the world was divided. Pantænus, Clement, and Origen, found a *Christian* Science, and in that approach the East; but they found it on the *Scriptures* and in that are nearer to the West: — (γνὼσις ἀληθῖνη — *true Science.*) Alas, it was not wholly so: and these Doctors, although they did not abandon the fundamental principles of Christianity, incorporated in their systems the insidious germs of the two great heresies, which have since troubled a subsequent epoch and all epochs.*

The School of Alexandria, by little and little, supplanted Gnosticism. But against that, in turn, are directed the arms of the severe and practical School of the West. A contest of a remarkable character, arises between these two churches, or Schools rather, in the third century. But the opposite tendencies seem to balance each other, and thus contribute to the prosperity of Religion. Al-

* Arianism and Pelagianism.

exandria originates a Theological spirit in the church. She begins to systematize, to elucidate her doctrines. She prevents a gross *Anthromorphism* from mingling with the celestial doctrines of Jesus Christ. The West is always bringing back to the simple and literal word of Scripture. It recalls to mind constantly, that Christianity is a thing to be *felt*, proved in the heart, and exhibited in the life. It prevents the changing of these positive and salutary doctrines for vain and fantastic speculations.

Such, Gentlemen, are some of the successive phases of our primitive form of Christianity. But in the midst of all a spirit of life still animates the Church. It is the age of her youth. These Christians, delivered from the sins of Paganism, feel the transforming influence of the gospel, with more energy, from being able to compare what it has made them, with what they were before. This

conflict with the world reminds them constantly of their vocation as soldiers of Jesus Christ. Every thing in the Church now *lives* — every thing *moves.* She aspires to the skies; she seems half-way ascended; and although the age of gold must be reserved for "the new heavens and the new earth," which she is expecting, the Christian Church presents, in these days of her youth and life, traits of beauty, that are absolutely celestial.

And what are the *doctrines*, which are professed by this new people, which the breath of the Almighty has created in the earth? They recognize *one living and true God.* They worship in God, not only the principle of all things, (*The Father,*) but the Redeemer also, (*The Son,*) and the sanctifier of fallen humanity, (*The Holy Spirit.*) They believed that the same God, who created man in righteousness has redeemed him from sin, and does not cease to sanctify him until he

comes to everlasting life. They knew nothing of the strange error, by which some would rob God of the work and glory of Redemption, by giving it to a creature.

The idea of *a Trinity in the God head* discovers itself from the very beginning of the primitive epoch, and never ceases to be proclaimed, in a manner the most distinct. How does the voice of these early soldiers of the Cross, confound the bold pretensions of modern times! Hear it: CLEMENT OF ROME, a disciple of Paul, renders glory to God in the following profession,—"One God, one Christ, one Spirit of Grace:" while *Polycarp*, a disciple of John, dying in the midst of the flames, ascribes eternal glory "to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

JUSTIN MARTYR, a converted sage, who in the time of the Antonines, poured out his blood for the cause of Christ, proclaims, "a unity in Trinity."—THEOPHILUS, Bishop of

Antioch, about the same time, and in a manner still more explicit, professes "*The Holy Trinity.*"

A little afterwards, we find TERTULLIAN, a lawyer of Africa, now become a pastor of God's flock, proclaiming "a Trinity of one Divine Being, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?" and in another place — "Let us guard well, the sacrament of our economy, 'a unity in Trinity,' recognizing *three*, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. — One in substance, one in estate, and one in power, became one God."*

And let us hear a Bishop of a city near our own, a city trampled by the fury of Christ's

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* *Note by the Translator.* — The original authorities are referred to, and printed in full, in the notes to Dr. Merle's pamphlet; but it has not been deemed necessary to insert them here.

enemies in his day, and by other furies in our own — let us hear IRENÆUS, of LYONS, who had left the enlightened shores of Asia to bear the glad tidings of salvation to the barbarous Gauls — how does *he* defend the great doctrine of *God manifest in the flesh!* "Christ" says he, "united in himself God and man: if MAN had not vanquished the enemy of man, (i. e. the Devil,) he had not been properly vanquished: but, on the other hand, if GOD had not wrought salvation, we could never have been assured of possessing it."

We have thus passed, as yet, only some few scores of years, from the death of the Apostles, and we have found proclaimed by so many illustrious Doctors, this doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, a doctrine of which Christ designed to establish a perpetual monument in the Church by the institution of Baptism. The first of all the Church's Teachers, defend this most consoling doctrine

of *God become Man.* The further we advance, the more do these testimonies increase: throughout, is most deeply engraven, both in the sentiments and worship of God's people, the eternal Divinity of the Son of God. Even one of the wisest of the Heathen sages, could say of them, "These Christians meet together, to sing hymns to Christ, as being God."— But do we inquire now, what these Christians of the primitive epoch believed *concerning man?* They did not imagine with certain Pagans and certain modern Doctors, that all evil proceeds from natural organization in man, and that this evil is not in opposition to the holiness of God! —— Their sentiment was, that the first man, having, by disobedience, separated his will from the will of God, human nature has been abandoned to itself, and thus separated from God, has fallen under the dominion of evil.

Let us approach, for proof, the college of

the Apostles: let us interrogate those who either surrounded or succeeded them. *Barnabas*, the companion of Paul, has these words: "Before we believed, the habitation of our hearts was full of corruption and sin; filled with idolatry, and a dwelling-place of demons." *Justin*, who had sought in vain, in all philosophy, a key to the history of man, finds it, at length, in the fall of Adam, effected by the seductions of Satan concealed in the form of a serpent. (See his Dialogue with Trypho, p. 306.)

The first man, according to the simple and practical *Irenæus*, is "like the case of one who, being incarcerated, propagates a race in prison." The profound *Tertullian* has already called the corruption of human nature "original sin." (*Vitium Originis.*) "The first man," says he, "infected the species descending from him, and rendered them partakers of his condemnation." *Cyprian*,

Bishop of Carthage, understands the origin of sin in the same way. "The infant, at birth, has no sin," says he, "unless it be, in that it is descended, according to the flesh, from Adam, and has, by its birth, contracted the contagion of death."

And now, if we betake ourselves to the school of Alexandria, and think to hear something more flattering to our pride from these philosophical Theologians, even there we shall learn from *Origen*, that "Adam turned from the straight way of Paradise, to take the evil ways of mortal life." "In consequence, all those who, descending from him, have come into the world, are also turned out of the way, and become, like him, unprofitable." "Every man is corrupted in his father and in his mother: Jesus Christ alone was born pure." "It is impossible that man, since his fall, should regard God; he must be subject, at first, to the dominion of sin."

Thus Egypt, as well as Gaul, and Africa, with Asia, alike recognize man as a being fallen and impure.

And how is this fallen and defiled being to be reconciled to a holy God? What thought the Christians of this primitive epoch, of the means by which God saves? Let us interrogate those again who surrounded the Apostles. They will teach us those sacred doctrines of Grace, which were more fully explained at a later period. "The Son of God has suffered," says *Barnabas*, "that his sufferings might give us life. He offered in sacrifice for us, the vessel of his spirit, (i. e. *his body*.)" Again, "Having learned to hope in the name of Christ, and having received the remission of sins, we are become *new men*, and *new-created*." *Hermas* — the same perhaps of whom Paul speaks — (Rom. xvi. 14) — says: "Before man receives the name of a child of God, he is condemned to death;

but when this seal is applied, he is delivered from death and passes into life." "The law of God," says *Justin*, "pronounced a curse upon man, inasmuch as he could not fulfil it in all its extent. (See Deut. xvii. 26.) But Christ has delivered us from this curse, in bearing it on our behalf." Do we speak differently, at the present day?

Irenæus sees in circumcision "a type of the saving blood of Christ, and in the tree of life, a type of the cross of Christ." Elsewhere he declares "that man must no longer seek to purify himself by sacrifices, but by Christ's blood and his death." The Paschal Lamb, according to him, foreshadowed Christ, "who saves those that believe in him, by the sprinkling of his blood;" and the two goats — of which the one was sent away into the wilderness, and the other sacrificed to God — was a representation of the two-fold coming of Christ, the one for death, and the

other for glory. He opposes to the disobedience of Adam, the obedience of Christ. — "Christ reconciles the Father to us," says he, "in replacing, by his obedience, the disobedience of the first man;" and, pursuing his comparison of a man cast into prison by sin, and into captivity to the Devil, declares that "Christ has paid the ransom necessary for deliverance from this captivity."

In the same way does *Origen* represent the death of Christ as "that power which delivers man from sin." Indeed, the entire Church regards the sufferings of the Lamb of God as the means by which the way to the Father has been re-opened to the children of men. It is faith which renders man a partaker of this deliverance, and this communicates, at the same time, a divine life. "Called by the grace of God," says *Clement of Rome*, "we are justified — not by ourselves, not by

our wisdom or goodness, or any works which we have wrought in the sanctity of our hearts; but by *faith*, according to which a sovereign God has justified men in all time. Do we live at ease, then, on that account? Do we cease to do good works? Far from it. We do good works with joy — even as God for ever works, and rejoices in his activity."

Behold, then, this holy Church of the primitive epoch. Hear how she speaks to us from the bosom of her griefs, and, as it were, from the height of the scaffolds where she suffered. She confesses her miseries, and embracing the knees of Jesus, calls him her "Saviour and her God." Who can misunderstand the profound accents of her sincere piety? How pitiable the occupation of those who would despoil her of these white robes, and clothe her with the tattered garments of a modern Infidelity! But this profane effort is, in the

mean time, a homage rendered to the Church — the first Unitarians had recourse to the same expedient.

Vain are all these devices; for whoever will listen, shall always hear the voice of the primitive Church proclaiming, with one accord, these unchangeable truths.

II. — THE FORM OF DOGMA.

In our view of the primitive epoch of the Church — although we have gathered only here and there a sheaf from the vast harvest — we have already extended ourselves beyond the proper limits of this discourse. We have done so, because it is in this age alone that our adversaries are wont to hazard the controversy. They despair of other periods; and they make loud and violent complaints, if the faith, which they cannot but acknowledge, is to be found in them. We will not therefore greatly strive for a field, on which

our foes proclaim in advance that they are vanquished, and must abandon.

This epoch opens as the era of great Doctors, great truths, and great heresies. It was the period in which Christian Theology — of which the elements had been preparing in a preceding epoch — was carried, by illustrious men of God, to its highest point of elevation. It was the era of *Athanasius*, of *Hilary*, of *Gregory*, of *Basil*, of *Ambrose*, of *Augustin*, and of *Chrysostom;* the time of lofty spirits; the *age mature* of the Church. The last murders of the confessors of Christ have ceased — the memorable Council of Nice has been held — the epoch of *Life* is finished — the form of *Dogma* begins. Not that there was no longer any life in the Church; but that the characteristic of dogma is that which now prevails. Now man loves to have distinct ideas of what he believes; to methodize; to render reasons. The Church, no

longer obliged to struggle with persecution from without, has more room to occupy herself with that which is within. She arranges the faith which she has long possessed.

The different tendencies of a former age, in the mean time, develop more and more; and by a remarkable transformation, arrange themselves in opposing doctrines — just as the dispositions of youth, at first vague and indeterminate, are resolved into distinct characteristics, in the mature man. The *two great heresies* appear, conducted by *Arius* and *Pelagius;* but even these heresies became the means which God uses for the better establishment of the truth. The doctrines so clearly defined by the Church of this pepiod will now be faithfully transmitted. They will be preserved and perpetuated amidst all the troubled barbarism of succeeding times. The Dogmatic form shall be, by divine grace, the shield of these truths in

days of coming struggle and revolution, and the very hammer to break their way into minds of hardened barbarism. But while, in order to recognize truth more distinctly, they divide it into many *minutiæ*, it must be confessed they sometimes seem to lose sight of the essence — the life itself.

The East and the West preserve, in the meantime, their peculiar characteristics. The East remains the country of lofty speculations — the West, that of practical questions. The East discourses concerning God — the West occupies itself more with man. The East produces an *Athanasius* — the West, a *Pelagius* and an *Augustin*. But both in the one country and in the other, the truth is assailed, and obtains distinguished victories. Having passed the time of its youth, the Christian doctrine, like the just man, is put to trial, but was not to prove a second fall. It will resist seduction; it will remain firm.

The doctrine concerning God was first expounded now, and with great clearness; because it was the first upon which man had dared to lay a menacing hand. *Athanasius*, a distinguished Doctor of Alexandria, discovers, in the profound mystery of human redemption, the necessity of the eternal Divinity of the Redeemer. *Earth has no Saviour, if its Saviour be not God.* If *Athanasius* consecrates his life, and submits to so many exiles, to defend the identity of substance between the Father and the Son, it is not that he attaches so great value to a dialectic subtlety; no, he combats for the essence of Christianity itself, and for the salvation of souls. Christianity has for its object to re-establish man in communication with God. In order to this, there must be a Mediator. "But," said *Athanasius*, "if the Son of God be different in essence from God, then would there be need of another

Mediator, to unite him with God. He alone can establish a real communication between God and his creatures, who has no need of a mediation for himself — but who *is himself* a part of the Divine essence. Now such is the Son of God. Were he a creature — be it the most excellent and exalted — he would, in interposing between God and man, instead of uniting, separate them one from another." (*Athan. Oratio contra Arian.*)

But let us hear the entire Church in the Symbols of her faith. "This is the faith universal," says she, "that we worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in unity — without confounding the Persons or dividing the Substance: for the Person of the Father is one; that of the Son, another, and that of the Holy Spirit, another. But the Father, Son, and Spirit, are one same Divinity — one equal Glory — one co-eternal Majesty. Such as is the Father, such is the Son, and such

the Holy Spirit. The Father is uncreated — the Son is uncreated — the Spirit is uncreated: the Father is God — the Son is God — the Spirit is God; but at the same time, there are not three Gods, but one God. — And the true faith is: — We believe and confess, that our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man: God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds began; and man, of the substance of the mother, born in time — perfect God and perfect man — equal to the Father, according to his Divinity — less than the Father, according to humanity." (*Athanasian Creed.*)

A controversy of sixty years (from 320 to 381) was necessary to determine, explain, and defend this doctrine of the Divinity of Christ.

But new combats now commenced to determine another dogma. A little after *Athanasius* and those who followed with him

appeared another Teacher in the Church, who seemed to have received a commission to explain and defend the true doctrine concerning MAN. This was *Augustin.* Already indeed had the truth on this subject been believed and confessed by those who had gone before him. "By the sin of one Adam," says *Hilary of Poictiers*, "all the human race has sinned." "We have all sinned in the first man," says *Ambrose*, "in him human nature has sinned." But it was when the great Doctor of the West arose; he under whose influence were to be found, during many ages, all who should have clear ideas of truth; it was when *Augustin* appeared, that all the depths of human impotency were developed.

This man had abandoned Manicheism, then Platonism — not finding in the one or the other that inward peace which he needed in the midst of life's tempests — and he

seized with avidity on the Gospel, which dissipated his doubts, consoled his heart, and scattered light in all his ways. In these combats with sin and a vain philosophy, he had learned to recognize *in himself* all the corruption of the human heart; and here is the chord which henceforth vibrates in all his instructions. Pursued at once by the sublime ideal of sanctity, and by all the seductions of sensuality, he sees opened, by the shock of these conflicting elements, the deep profundities of his own heart — even as the tempests of the ocean will sometimes uncover the depths of the abyss. To perfect his opportunities, he now comes in contact with a man, who, without ideal, is placed in easy and ordinary circumstances of life, and who has formed thence, the most preposterous opinions of the morality of human nature.

Augustin enters the lists with *Pelagius*.

But this is not a controversy between two men alone: it lies between principles — two leading tendencies of the human mind, which have appeard in all ages. *Augustin* sees the first man estranging himself from God: from this estrangement proceeds sin, and from this, the moral disorder of all humanity. Human nature, according to him, is a mass of ruin. (*Massa perditionis.*) The consequence, as well as the punishment of sin, in all his descendants, is the obligation to sin also. (*Obligatio pecati.*) Man has lost his liberty, and his power to do any good work. He can no more have any thing, except as God is pleased to give it to him. If some come to have the faith of the gospel, while others do not — the reason cannot be found in man; since all are equally incapable of any good: it is to be found in the special act of God alone — in the secret counsels of the Almighty — in an election of grace.

After a controversy of nearly thirty years — carried on in Africa, in Italy, and in Middle Gaul — the truth triumphs, and the doctrine of the total inability of man, remains in the Church.

In the same spirit was *the doctrine of grace* explained and enforced by these great minds; and this brings us to the third point, which is to be examined. Already had it been said by the excellent *Hilary;* "Redemption is given gratuitously — not according to the merit of works, but according to the will of the giver — the choice of Him who redeems us." — "In this consists the grace of God — says *Augustin* — that He justifies, not by our righteousness, but by his own." But he insists above all, that the idea of grace excludes all merit, and all natural disposition in man to receive salvation. God is the *Alpha* and *Omega* with him — the beginning and the end of our sal-

vation. "That which God begins by operating — says he — He ends by co-operating: Commencing — He operates, that we might be willing — and to finish, he now co-operates with those who have the will: — "*He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.*"

Thus is the Christian science greatly advanced in this era. The doctrines of God, of man, of salvation, which the teachers of of the first period had indeed seen in the Scriptures, are now sounded with greater precision and more profound research. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, Theology advances; for there is, gentlemen such a thing as progress, even in Theology. What shall we say then of those, who, even at this day, would persuade us to abandon this advance not only, but to return to those errors which the Church has long since rejected? "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection."

III. — THE SCHOLASTIC FORM.

A new form succeeds to that which has supplanted the primitive. After ages of darkness, the East beheld a great intellectual movement in the eleventh century. This form has been called the *Scholastic* from *Schola* — the School. The School seeks to separate itself from the Church, which had hitherto been supreme — to obtain action and authority, independent of the hierarchy. Certain liberal minded men, who were in the beginning at least, neither monks nor ecclesiastics, determined to establish schools altogether distinct from those which had hitherto existed. From these schools soon arises the University of Paris, the mother of Scholastic Philosophy. The general character of the scholastic form, then, is the *Spirit of the Schools*, we may say, of *the University, or of Science.* To apply philosophy to Christianity; to reduce

Christian doctrines to systems; to show their connections, their internal proofs, and to measure them not only by the heart, but by the understanding; such is the tendency of the Scholastic form of Religion: so that if the first era may be called the form of *life*, and the second that of *doctrines* — the third is that of *system*. There is yet life — there are yet doctrines; but that which pervails is the systematic. It was then that each Doctor published his *system* — his *Summa Theologiæ*. It was the *age advanced* of the Church, which naturally succeeded to its youth and manhood. It is the age which loves to *arrange* what it had before *collected*. It meditates: it has little of impulse, but more of reflection. There were indeed men of great force in this middle era; but the prevailing disposition was to reflection and system.

Historical studies there were yet none:

the exegetical, were no more as esteemed; and yet the human mind was awaking with great force all over Europe. It needed a guide to direct it, and this guide was found in Dialectic Philosophy: and as Theology was the science of the age, the human mind adventured upon this field, under the auspices of their new leader. This tendency of the scholastic might lead to rationalism — to infidelity; but the good doctors of the age opposed to these the holy truths of Theology. "The Christian (says *Anslem*, the father of Scholastic Theology) should come to understand through faith, and not to faith through understanding. I seek not to comprehend, in order to believe; I believe, that I may comprehend." "And I believe even, because if I did not believe, I should not comprehend." Immediately *Abelard* and his school avail themselves of the scholastic principle and become the advocates of free examina-

tion. They wish first to comprehend, and then to believe. "Faith, say they, established by examination, is much more solid. It is necessary to meet the enemies of the Gospel on their own ground: if we are not to discuss, we must believe every thing, the false as well as the true."

In the mean time whatever may have been the danger of these tendencies, and whatever the reproaches of the Church, we cannot accuse these doctors with having abandoned any doctrine of the Christian faith. We cannot however wholly absolve them. Scholasticism often disfigured Christian truth. Its tendencies and the times in which it appeared, necessarily led to this. Human reason never ventures without danger on those great truths which surpass created intelligence. The school of the middle ages, like that of Alexandria before, shook the foundations of the Christian system, in

attempting to establish them. It had its great minds, and under its influence there was progress — I will not say of Religion, but of science, of Theology. The great men, who were the lights of these times, communicated much instruction to the scholars, who filled their schools, and who followed them by thousands, and into the descent, if necessary, where chairs of doctrine were established.

It has become common, with certain unbelievers, to brand Christian orthodoxy, as an *invention of the middle ages.* This trite accusation does too much honour to the age in question : The Christian doctrine already existed. But let us interrogate some of the men of this age.

For their exposition of the *doctrine of Salvation,* let us hear *Anselm,* the most influential perhaps of all the Philosophical Theologians — *Anselm* of Canterbury, the

second *Augustin* of the Latin Church, who knew so well how to unite the researches of Philosophy with the purity of the Christian faith. The system of Redemption is developed by him, in a manner to satisfy at once the understanding and the heart. "All rational creatures, says he, are under obligation to submit their wills to the will of the great Creator. This law, the first man transgressed, and thus destroyed the harmony of moral order. Now the law of eternal righteousness demands, either that the human race should be punished, or that by some satisfaction, proceeding from humanity, that order should be restored. Without this, it would be altogether inconsistent that polluted man should hold communion with happy spirits. But man could not, of himself, accomplish this satisfaction. As human nature had been corrupted by one, so by one ought the satisfaction to be made.

He, who should effect this, must be some being above creatures. He must be God himself; and in the mean time he must be human also, to the end that the satisfaction may be applicable to humanity. This could be none other, then, than GOD-MAN, the Mediator. This God-man, must deliver himself up to death voluntarily, since he was not as God, subject to death: and he must exhibit perfect obedience in the midst of the greatest sorrows. God would then owe to Christ a recompence; but Christ, as God, could need no recompence: He could therefore transfer his merits to the world, and demand for his reward the salvation of believers. Thus speaks *Anselm* in his Treatise — *Cur Deus homo?*

But what is remarkable — considering the common opinion formed of these men — is, that they insist much *on the sanctifying influence of faith.* "The sufferings of

Christ, says *Peter Lambord*, the illustrious *Master of the Sentences* — deliver us from sin; for this immense sacrifice of divine love inspires us with love for God, and this love works our sanctification." "The just man, who lives by faith, says *Robert Pulleyn*, is already sanctified within, and exhibits good works as signs of his faith and sanctification: faith first produces righteousness of heart, and righteousness of heart produces good works." *Alexander de Hales*, who was called *the irrefragable doctor*, speaks thus: "Man in his original state never opposed himself to God. He then had need only of *formative grace*; but now that there is something in him opposite to God, and which cannot be removed except by the power of God, man needs *transformative grace*."

There are undoubtedly some differences between these great men, but these differ-

ences only show how firmly established they were in the essential truths of Salvation. *Anselm*, for instance, *Thomas Aquinas*, and others, supposed that the sacrifice of Christ effected the salvation of man, in virtue of an intrinsic value; (*ex insito valore:*) while many other Scholastics, and *Duns Scott* in particular, contended that it was owing solely to the design and counsel of God. This was the difference; while all proclaimed that man was a lost being, and saved alone by the death of the God-man Jesus Christ.

IV.— THE FORM OF THE REFORMATION.

Such is the testimony of these last ages, to say nothing of the *Wickliffs* and the *Waldos*, the forerunners of that great movement, which now began to appear in the world. The Church had had its youth, full of life

and vigour, its manhood mature with strength and clearness, and its ripe age of reason and of system. But after the period of the schools the age of rationalism was past. Now the hierarchy sought to embrace all within its iron grasp : life, dogma, system, lay as under a funeral stone, and all the noble tendencies of the Church must die. Vain effort ! She burst these bands of death, rolled back the stone of the Sepulchre, and came forth, a dead man restored to life ! Let us salute her, under this fourth form, *the form of the Reformation.*

If the three preceding forms were those of life, of doctrines, of system, what shall be the characteristic of this? Gentlemen, the Reformation was the *re-establishment* of former things. But this re-establishment will not have respect to any one of the preceding forms exclusively ; it shall be the re-uniting of the whole. Of these, which

had before existed only in separate forms, it will now form an admirable *Triology*. Behold, our *fourth form*, an epoch of the Church. The Reformation takes the form of system, carries that back to dogma, and then crowns all with the characteristic of life. It unites the three wisdoms of preceding ages.

She commenced with *the life*. *Luther* proved, through divine grace, the living influence of Christianity, as no preceding Doctor, perhaps, had ever felt it before. The Reformation sprang living from his own heart, where God himself had placed it. The era which passed during the time of the Teacher of Wittemburgh, was, so to speak, *all life*. This is so true, that the admirable work published by *Melancthon*, (the Theologian of the Reformation,) we speak now of the 1st edition of his *Loci Communes* — omits the doctrine of the *essence of God and the Trinity*. Not that he considered these

doctrines unimportant; they are, on the contrary, the basis of his system; but because in his own words, "it is more profitable to adore these mysteries, than deeply attempt to sound them."

But even here you will find that Christian life is built on Christian doctrine: and then accordingly, in the second period of the Reformation, (that which produced *the confession of Augsburgh*, drawn up by Melancthon himself,) these doctrines are presented, defined, and illustrated in all their force. The Trinity, total depravity, and above all, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, are there explained with a clearness and force scarce equalled in the epoch of dogmatism itself. You find *system*, also, in the harmonious distribution of all the doctrines of Christianity; and this characteristic appears above all in the third period of the Reformation, under the influence of Me-

lancthon of Germany, and *Calvin* of Geneva. THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTES of our Reformer, will remain for ages, one of the most beautiful monuments of the Christianity of *system.*

Would you know how strong is the testimony of this epoch to the immutable truths of the Gospel, hear the great Doctor of Wittemburgh on *the Divinity of Christ.* "If Christ," says he, "be not the true and essential God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and the creator of all creatures — *we are lost:* for of what avail were the sufferings and death of Christ, if he were only man like you and I? He could not, in that case, conquer Satan, sin, and death. We need a Saviour, who is truly God over all: the conqueror of sin and death, of Satan and hell. In vain do the Arians tell us he is the most exalted of *creatures.* They wish in this way to screen their shameful error, that the people may not

perceive it; but if we corrupt the doctrine of Christ in the least degree, irreparable mischief is done. If you take away his proper Divinity, there is no deliverance for us from the wrath to come."

And what is the doctrine of the Reformation *concerning man?* It reduces to powder the subtleties of the Scholastics on this point, and presents the truth with an admirable clearness and simplicity. Luther, even before the publication of his famous Theses on Indulgences, published others concerning man; and here are some of the great truths, which, even at the morning of the Reformation, he declares himself ready to defend.

"That man has become an evil tree, and can neither will nor do any thing but evil."

"On the part of man, there is nothing preceding grace but impotency and rebellion."

"There is no moral virtue without pride, or discontent, (*tristesse,*) that is without sin."

"He who is destitute of the grace of God sins continually, though he should not steal, kill, or commit adultery."

But in what manner shall we speak, gentlemen, of the testimony which the Reformation gives to the *doctrine of grace?* It was by this doctrine that it overturned entirely the foundations of Rome.

The Reformation never suffers man to rest the hope of his salvation in any thing done by himself or in himself. Christ is the only foundation; and faith, in his name, the only means of grace. Every other view leads either to pride or despair. Hear Luther: writing to his friend *Sphanlein*, he says, "Have you at length despaired of your own righteousness? And do you rejoice and confide in the righteousness of Christ? Learn, my brother, to know Christ and him crucified; learn to despair of yourself and to sing this song, 'Jesus, my Lord, thou art

my righteousness, and I thy sin: thou hast taken that which was mine, and given me that which belonged to thee: thou hast become what thou wast not, and caused me to be what I was not myself.' "Works," says he, "on one occasion, are not taken into consideration, when justification is the subject concerned. True faith, indeed, will never fail to produce good works, any more than the sun will fail to shine; but after all, it is not our good works which dispose God to justify us."

"Undoubtedly," says Melancthon, "renovation of heart must flow from faith; but if you inquire after justification, turn your eyes from this renovation and fix them on the promises — on Christ — knowing that we are justified only for the love of Christ, and not on account of our new nature. Faith justifies, not as some suppose, because it is in us, as the root of a good tree; but because it

lays hold on Jesus Christ, for the love of whom we are rendered acceptable to God." "We offer nothing to God," says Calvin, "but by his grace, we are become, as it were, all pure without regard to our works."

All the Reformers, while they differ on some points, are of one accord in this. In Germany, in Switzerland, in France, in Great Britain, in Italy even, and in Spain, they teach the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone.

But why do I enlarge? Have we not *the Confessions* of the Reformers, and do not the adversaries of our faith, as well as its friends, agree that this was pre-eminently the doctrine of the Reformation?

Gentlemen; there is yet another period—a *fifth* form, perhaps, now commencing for the Church; — a form unknown, mysterious, and of which the characteristics cannot yet be

very clearly defined. Of one thing however we may be confident: one thing the past teaches, and that is, that the same great verities which have formed the foundation hitherto, will be the essence of the form which is yet to come. The salutary doctrines which have yet governed the Church, will not relinquish her helm now. This precious vessel shall not be abandoned to perfidious and ephemeral winds; — to the heresies of *Theodosius* and *Pelagius* — of *Arius* and *Socinus*. *Ce qui ete sera!* That which has been, will be.

Further than this: the history of the past is a guarantee that the future shall re-unite all which was good in forms, that are now no more. God will not permit any thing to be lost, which was once in his Church, and for his Church. And this leads me to glance at an error of some well-intentioned Christians, who speak of returning to primitive Chris-

tianity, without caring for what lies in the way from that to the present times. The Church could no more disengage itself from the influence of the different forms through which she has passed, than a tree could despoil itself of the different layers with which each returning spring has clothed it; or the body of a full grown man get rid of the accretions of previous years.

For us, gentlemen, we will not indeed turn our eyes wholly to the future; but neither will we wholly reject the past. The past will be *in* the future. Life, doctrines, system, all will be united and perfectly, in the form which is yet to be.

In the meantime there will undoubtedly be something to distinguish this new form from that of the Reformation; but who shall say what it will be? I will venture to say thus much, — that perhaps the principal characteristic, will be *the missionary spirit* —

the carrying to all the race of men, and to every individual that which the preceding forms have preserved and produced. Did not the period of the Reformation unite the isolated good of three preceding eras, to the end that the new period might stretch out its hand, laden with these riches, and scatter them abroad over all the earth? Ought not these riches to become the property of all men, and in a manner they have not yet been? But I refrain from these suggestions — covered as they are with a veil of deep obscurity.

But one thing is certain and we ought to know it. We are, gentlemen, entering on a new era for science and for the Church: and ours is the generation which must give to this new era its first and most important impulse. There is much to do, and but few as yet to accomplish it. You, at least, my voice can reach. Destined, therefore, to open this new direction of piety and of science, form

yourselves as scribes and teachers for the work. Understand, that to conquer a strong infidelity will require a strong faith and extensive knowledge. Enrich yourselves with the past, to prepare for the future. Ye young men, who are yet to serve the Church of Him who has given his life for the sheep; and ye who are already established over the flock, understand well what it is, which a sound Theology will require. Profit by the instructions of history. Let her carry you beyond the narrow bounds with which prejudice or locality may have surrounded you — and leave the dull track where servile spirits are willing to drag themselves along. Live — not alone with the passing moment, but with other ages. History invokes them: history surrounds you with them, and makes you hear their grand and solemn testimony.

Will you reject the voice of all the Church, and of Jesus Christ himself, for the voice of a

single teacher? Will you despise that glory which comes from God, and seek for that which comes from the present world? Pursue this wonderful chain, the first link of which is in God himself, and which, forming itself through so many ages, has reached at length even unto us. Be unwilling to turn aside for some obscure heresy: be firm and faithful, should you find yourselves alone — alone in the Church, alone in the world — a confessor and a martyr for "God manifest in the flesh." Be not disheartened, but comfort yourselves in reflecting that you have God for your witness, and the company of all those illustrious men, whose voice you have to-day heard. History shows that Christianity has, in all ages, acted with force upon the minds of men; but shows at the same time, that it is by the same doctrines that this regenerating influence has been felt. The orthodox dogmas alone have had this power,

whether on individuals or a people. All others have served only to amuse, and to ruin them. Never will you find life, where you do not find truth. Are you willing then to be mere rhetoricians, and amused by high-sounding language; or do you desire to be the benefactors of your race, and save them by the power and wisdom of God? Attach yourselves, I pray you, to that which is saving — immutable — eternal: associate yourselves with a sacred host. Behold; what mighty efforts are now making in Switzerland and in France, in Germany and in Holland, in Great Britain and America, to restore to the world a sound Theology and establish the throne of truth.

And thou, O God most High: by that light which causeth to see light — illuminate our minds, and open the portals of that science, whose unsearchable treasures are concealed in Jesus Christ!

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